NEWS FROM TRAIL OF JOHNSON COUNTY

TRAIL Guide

November 2026

25 years strong: Lessons from the national Village movement

By TRAIL Executive Director Christine Scheetz



This September, the Village to Village Network (https://www.vtvnetwork.org/) brought together Village leaders, volunteers, and advocates from across the country—including Jessica and me—for its 2026 National Virtual Village Gathering. The theme, **"The Village Movement: 25 Years Strong,"** celebrated a quarter-century of helping older adults remain independent, engaged, and connected in the communities they call home.

For me, the conference was both inspiring and affirming. While Villages vary in size, geography, and services, we share a fundamental belief: **aging well isn't simply about having access to services. It's about relationships, purpose, belonging, and having choices about how we live.**

Conference sessions explored some of the most important challenges and opportunities facing Villages today: reducing loneliness and isolation, supporting members as their needs change, strengthening partnerships, demonstrating community impact, and making our organizations more inclusive and sustainable.

One particularly compelling theme was the importance of collaboration. Villages cannot—and should not—try to meet every need alone. By building relationships with health care providers, community organizations, local governments, and other partners, we can connect older adults with a broader network of support.

The future of aging isn't something that simply happens to us. It's something we can shape together. Looking ahead to the new year, TRAIL will be strengthening volunteer engagement, expanding partnerships, and exploring new ways to serve our members and reach more older adults throughout Johnson County. If you are already engaged, thank you. If you are looking for ways to become more involved, please reach out to us at info@trailofjohnsoncounty.org or by calling the office at 319-800-9003.

As TRAIL approaches its 10th anniversary, the conference reminded us that we are part of something much bigger than one organization or one community. We are part of a movement that is redefining what it means to grow older—not as a time of diminishing possibilities, but as a chapter of life rich with purpose, connection, and opportunity. Every ride provided, every friendship formed, every helping hand extended is part of that transformation.





Founders, Donors, Volunteers, Members

Joy Smith and David Rust



Joy Smith and David Rust hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains this fall.

David and Joy are “all in” with TRAIL.

It started simply enough, like most passion projects do. In 2012 Joy Smith and David Rust were thinking about how they wanted to live as they aged—in their own home, along with friends and neighbors who could assist each other with home and transportation needs.

Before they knew it, they were helping establish TRAIL of Johnson County, the nonprofit organization to which they have remained committed as founders, donors, volunteers, and members.

As founders, they participated in years of organizational and committee work and were early contributors to the $125,000 start-up campaign that provided the solid financial base for the launch of TRAIL in 2017. Influenced by their backgrounds in special education and social work, the couple strongly advocated for helping low-income seniors in Johnson County, which grew into today’s Supported Membership Program.

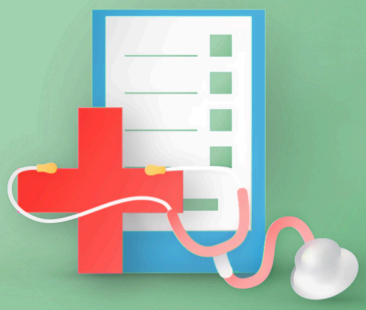
Now in their late 70s, Joy and David continue to volunteer with TRAIL. Both have served on the Board of Directors and various committees over the years and now provide direct services to Full members.

David has been the host of the Men’s Book Club for seven years, meeting monthly at a local restaurant. And, as a member service volunteer, he helps with home chores, errands, and transportation. He notes, “I like getting to know people I wouldn’t otherwise encounter and helping them get things done.”

Joy has been a medical advocate but currently dedicates most of her volunteer hours to the Life Transition Service, assisting Full members who need to make changes required by a decline in their health.

“TRAIL was founded on the Village-to-Village Network concept of ‘neighbors caring for neighbors,’ in our case volunteers caring for members. It’s very important that we continue to understand that we are a volunteer-first organization and that members can also be volunteers,” Joy says.

As Full members, Joy and David have used volunteer services only when they travel, including rides to the airport and house checks while they are out of town. But they know the day will come when they need more services and are counting on their commitment and that of many other donors, members, and volunteers to ensure that TRAIL will be there to help.



Open enrollment is here!

Medicare benefits are offered as an annual contract. Each year, you may make changes to your coverage between October 15 and December 7.

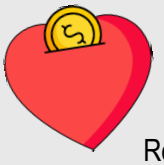
Even if you're pleased with your current plan, experts encourage you to compare other available options. Here's why:

- **Plan coverage changes:** Coverage provided by insurance companies changes year-to-year, which could result in your paying more in out-of-pocket healthcare expenses. Review the annual notice of change from your current plan provider, which you should have received in September.
- **Health status changes**: Have you been through a major life change? Changes in your expenses, income, or health status may impact your plan choice.
- **New plans available:** Are there comparable, lower-cost plans available or better coverage that offsets other costs, such as gym expenses? New plans may have become available.
- **Network options:** Are the same hospitals and doctors covered under your plan this year? Network options change frequently. If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, make sure your doctor will still accept your plan next year. If your doctor is out of network, you may consider choosing a new plan to avoid paying higher out-of-pocket costs.
- **Change to prescriptions:** Have you been prescribed or do you anticipate being prescribed new medications in the coming year? Carefully review your prescription drug coverage, including copayment and coinsurance costs.

To review your options with some expert help, take advantage of these resources:

Visit medicare.gov and healthcare.gov, the official government sites available to apply for and compare coverage plans

Make an appointment with the State Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) counselors at the Iowa City Senior Center. Visit icgov.org/government/departments-and-divisions/senior-center/appointments-for-services or call the Center at 319-356-5220. Act now, appointments fill up fast!



Make today **your** "Philanthropy Day"

Following a proclamation by President Ronald Reagan, the first-ever National Philanthropy Day took place on November 15, 1986. Forty years later, the day still celebrates the meaning of giving and acknowledges the crucial role philanthropy plays in improving lives and strengthening communities. And it's the perfect time for **you** to honor the occasion with a gift to TRAIL.

Philanthropy (the ancient Greek word means "love of humankind") certainly improves the lives of TRAIL members and strengthens our supportive community of members, volunteers, donors, and community partners. Donations from individuals and organizations typically account for about half of TRAIL's annual budget. Put simply, TRAIL wouldn't be able to fulfill its vital mission without your support.

TRAIL's annual fund campaign is now under way. You may have received a letter from Executive Director Christine Scheetz in recent weeks, encouraging you to make a contribution to TRAIL before yearend. We hope you'll respond to that request as generously as you are able, whether via the mail or online at https://trailofjohnsoncounty.kindful.com/. Gifts large and small make a difference and are gratefully received. ***Thank you!***

THE SEPTUAGENARIAN WHO INSPIRED THANKSGIVING

We can thank 74-year-old Sarah Josepha Hale (pictured right) for the annual gathering of gratitude, fall foods, and football fans that we call Thanksgiving.



In September 1863 she wrote to President Abraham Lincoln, encouraging him to confirm that a "day of our annual Thanksgiving [be] made a National and fixed Union Festival." Prior to this, many states, mainly those in the North and New England, had scheduled their own Thanksgiving celebrations. Hale, an activist, editor, and writer, had campaigned for a country-wide Thanksgiving for years.

President Lincoln responded almost immediately and on October 3, 1863, issued his Proclamation of Thanksgiving, setting aside the last Thursday of November* for this recognition.

In this proclamation, Lincoln reminded citizens that, even in the midst of the Civil War, they had many blessings to be grateful for. To see the full text of this document, visit The American Presidency Project.

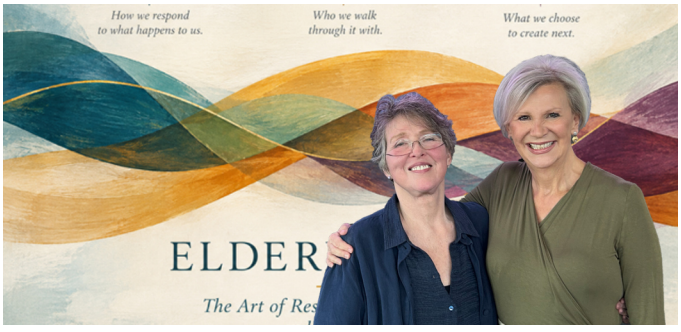
*President Franklin Roosevelt moved the date to the fourth Thursday in November in 1941.



Recognizing that Thanksgiving has a fraught history, the Smithsonian-affiliated National Museum of the American Indian provides a thoughtful perspective on the experience of native Americans here: Rethinking Thanksgiving Celebrations.

"Closing the Gap" closes with "Elderescence"

Now in its second year, TRAIL's popular "Closing the Gap: Healthspan vs Lifespan" seminar series ended on a high note. Keynote speaker Connie Benton Wolfe, whose original Oct. 1 kickoff presentation was rescheduled for Oct. 29, teamed up with TRAIL Executive Director Christine Scheetz to engage and inspire the audience with a presentation on "Elderescence."



Looking at life stages, Connie explained, we think of childhood as a time of growing, adolescence as a time of becoming, and adulthood as a time of building. "Elderescence" describes the later stage of life, which she defines as a time of "becoming again"—an opportunity for continued adult development, agency, connection, and possibility.

To make the most of this phase of life, Connie advises older adults to **weave a sturdy "tapestry" of three vital threads:**

- **Resilience:** How we respond to what happens to us
- **Relationships:** Who we walk through it with
- **Reinvention:** What we choose to create next

To view Connie and Christine's full Oct. 29 PowerPoint presentation as well as the presentations from the earlier sessions in this series—Strength, Balance, and Mobility; Bone Health; and Brain Health—visit the "Additional Resources" page on the TRAIL website.

"Closing the Gap" will return next October and we welcome your suggestions for content. The purpose of this series is to provide attendees with information and tools for living not only longer lives, but happier and healthier ones as well. Please send your ideas for future seminar speakers and topics to Christine Scheetz at christine@trailofjohnsoncounty.org.

Our thanks to all who attended this year's "Closing the Gap" sessions. We look forward to welcoming you to an equally valuable series in 2027!

November is NATIONAL HOME CARE AND HOSPICE MONTH

For this issue of *TRAIL Guide*, Essence of Life Hospice is pleased to share the following information about hospice care.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR HOSPICE CARE?

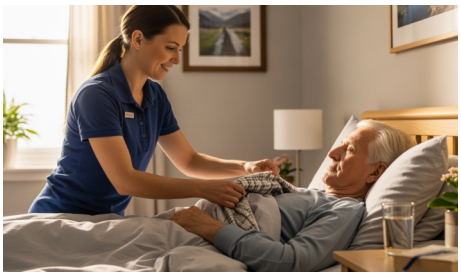
The Medicare Hospice Benefit is available to all individuals with the Medicare Part A benefit and with a life expectancy of six months or less if the terminal illness or disease runs its normal course. The individual, of course, must choose hospice, and the individual's eligibility must be certified by a physician (most often the hospice's medical director, together with the attending physician). In addition, hospice care is covered by Medicaid and most commercial insurance plans.

WHAT DOES HOSPICE CARE PROVIDE?

- Nurses, aides, and a full care team coming to your home
- Support for caregivers, including time to rest and recharge
- Help with medications, equipment, and supplies related to care
- Someone you can call anytime, day or night
- Care focused on comfort, not more hospital visits
- Grief support for families, even after a loved one has passed

WHAT ARE SOME UNIQUE HOSPICE SERVICES?

- Chaplains and spiritual counselors are available for every patient, regardless of religion or belief. Quality hospice supports the whole person, including their spiritual needs.
- Many hospices have special programs just for veterans, including pinning ceremonies and volunteers who are veterans themselves. It's a way to honor their service and say thank you.
- A nurse or care team member is available by phone 24/7, even overnight. Families never have to face an urgent question or crisis alone.



MYTHS about hospice care

National HOME CARE AND HOSPICE NOVEMBER

MYTH: Hospice means someone is about to die any moment.
FACT: Many patients receive hospice care for months. More time in hospice is often better for patients and their loved ones!

MYTH: Starting hospice means giving up your other doctors.
FACT: Your hospice team works alongside your regular doctors, not instead of them.

MYTH: Hospice is only about helping people pass away peacefully.
FACT: Hospice focuses on comfort and quality of life, helping people live as fully as possible for as long as possible.

THANKS to **Solon Retirement Village** for sponsoring this month's newsletter.



Kalona Trip: On a sunny October 9, six TRAIL members enjoyed a day trip to Kalona for lunch and a little "poking around." They are, from left to right: Janet Brooks, Mary Lynn Eckert, Alfrieta Monagan, Betsy Fischer, and Liz Voss. Not pictured: Barb Stein.



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solonretirementvillage.com 319-624-3492



NOTE: Some events are virtual, while others are in person. Full details for each event can be found on TRAIL's online calendar.

New events are frequently added, so check TRAIL's weekly calendar preview emailed on Fridays or the online calendar to stay up-to-date.

Calendar key: BLUE events are for TRAIL members. GREEN (virtual) and YELLOW (in-person) events are hosted by other groups but may be of interest to TRAIL members.

Members pay their own fees if there is a cost associated with an event ($). Want to attend an event, but need a ride? Full members can call Jessica at 319-800-9003 or email her at membersupport@trailofjohnsoncounty.org.

If you have questions or suggestions about the newsletter, email info@trailofjohnsoncountyorg.

OUR MISSION:
TRAIL is powered by volunteers to help older adults live and age with support, safety, and connection in the places they call home by providing tools and resources for active independent living.

Upcoming TRAIL Events Calendar

Book Club: *Joyland* by Stephen King (via Zoom)
Monday, November 16, 1 to 2 PM

Hoover Presidential Library and Museum Tour and Lunch $
Tuesday, November 17, 10:30 AM to 2 PM
Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, 210 Parkside Drive, West Branch

Technology for Aging in Place (via Zoom)
Wednesday, November 18, 2 to 3 PM

Advice on Aging
Thursday, November 19, 10 AM to noon
Coralville Public Library, 1401 5th Street, Coralville

Tour of the ICPL Digital Media Lab
Thursday, November 19, 6 to 7 PM
Iowa City Public Library, 123 South Linn Street, Iowa City

Butter and Jam: Dine Around (Full) $
Friday, November 20, 10:30 AM to noon
Butter and Jam, 801 1st Avenue, Coralville



University of Iowa Mobile Clinic
Sunday, November 22, 1 to 4 PM
Iowa City Public Library, Meeting Rooms A, B, C, D
123 South Linn Street, Iowa City

TRAIL Office Closed for Thanksgiving
Thursday and Friday, November 26 and 27

New Member Orientation
Thursday, December 3, 1:30 to 2:30 PM
Java House, 1575 South 1st Avenue, Iowa City

Eastside Artists Show
Friday thru Sunday, December 4, 5, and 6, Times vary by day
Masonic Building, 312 East College Street, Iowa City

Some Cheer at Big Grove
Tuesday, December 8, 3 to 5 PM
Big Grove Brewery, 1225 South Gilbert Street, Iowa City



Holiday Flowers at Willow and Stock
Wednesday, December 9, 9 to 10 AM
Willow and Stock, 27 North Linn Street, Iowa City

Coffee Hour $
Tuesday, December 15, 10 to 11:30 AM
Sidekick Coffee & Books, 1310 ½ Melrose Avenue, Iowa City

Book Club: *Meeting New People* by Daniel Lavery (via Zoom)
Monday, December 21, 1 to 2 PM

TRAIL Office Closed for Christmas
Thursday and Friday, December 24 and 25